

THE CENTER

FOR THE FUTURE OF TEACHING & LEARNING

October 27, 2000

James P. Mayer
Executive Director
Little Hoover Commission
923 L Street, Suite 805
Sacramento, CA 95814

Attention: Peter McNamee

Dear Mr. Mayer:

Thank you for your kind invitation to provide testimony to the Little Hoover Commission's November 16 hearing on attracting and retaining high quality teachers for California's classrooms. I also appreciate your willingness to vary from the Commission's standard practice of requesting full written testimony in advance and allowing the Center the option of submitting this summary letter.

During the past two years the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning has been engaged in a major research effort called *Teaching and California's Future*. Last December we issued a report with findings and recommendations entitled *The Status of the Teaching Profession: Research Findings and Policy Recommendations*. The purpose of this report is to provide to members of the policy community sound, reliable data upon which decisions regarding strengthening teacher development can be based. Further, the report contains a careful analysis of that data, coupled with a set of Task Force recommendations on how to strengthen the teacher development system. We have provided copies of the full report and its summary to the Commission members, giving them an opportunity to review our findings.

On November 16 my plan will be to summarize the findings of our December report; update - to the extent possible - the information we have provided in the past on the teacher work force; and outline what we consider to be the teacher quality issues that continue to require the attention of the state's educational policy makers. The key points that I will be emphasizing in my testimony include the following:

- C Through our teacher licensing system California has established a basic or minimum guarantee regarding the qualifications and competence expected of an individual assuming the responsibility of a classroom teacher. The basic framework is sound, requiring candidates to: 1) achieve knowledge of the subject(s) they teach, 2) develop instructional skill to deliver that material to students, and 3) have experience in a classroom before qualifying for employment. However, too

often these requirements are bypassed, and underqualified individuals are given full charge of classrooms, especially in schools where there are high concentrations of poor, minority, and English language learner students.

- C California has a serious shortage of qualified teachers who are willing to accept the available teaching positions. In *The Status of the Teaching Profession* we reported that in 1998-99 there were 28,500 teachers, or about 12 percent of the teacher work force, who do not meet the minimum qualifications to teach and are working on emergency permits. Preliminary indications are that the numbers of emergency permit teachers increased in 1999-00 to somewhere between 34,000 and 37,000. While these overall statewide statistics provide a picture of the teacher workforce as a whole, these figures can mask even more serious issues unless the information is disaggregated. Consider for example the following:

- < Under prepared teachers are inequitably distributed throughout the state resulting in the least prepared teachers being concentrated in the most challenging classrooms. Regardless of the measure of educational need considered—poverty, minority background, limited English proficiency, or achievement—the higher the concentration of students in need, the greater the number of under prepared teachers assigned to teach them.
- < Certain subject areas have a disproportionate percentage of under qualified teachers. For example, in mathematics 12% of the teacher work force is under qualified while only 5% of the social science teachers are under qualified.
- < There is a mismatch between the ethnic make-up of the student population and the teaching workforce. In 1999-2000, 37% of the student population was Anglo while 75% of the teaching force was from that group. In that same year 47% of the students were Latino, but only 13% of the teachers were of Latino background.

- C While the issues of recruitment, preparation, and hiring suggested by the forgoing are very important aspects of a comprehensive teacher quality agenda for California, we must not lose sight of the critical need to address the skills and knowledge of our 291,000 veteran teachers. In recent years we have adopted a school reform agenda that asks more of our teachers than ever before:

- < We have adopted rigorous academic content standards that we expect all students to meet;
- < We have worked to eliminate social promotion and replaced it with high stakes testing that will soon determine whether or not individual students will receive a high school diploma;
- < We have established accountability programs and an Academic Performance Index that provide both individual and school sanctions and rewards for performance; and

- < We have made these changes at a time when the composition of the student population is changing rapidly and the distractions of modern society are increasing.
- C Our work to date indicates that teachers are not getting the kind of professional development that they need to meet these challenges. In our 1999 survey of 1,000 teachers we found that:
 - < Less than 50% of the participants reported that their development activities made a difference in their practice;
 - < More than 40% reported that these activities were a series of single events with little or no follow-up;
 - < Only a little over half of the respondents indicated that their professional development provided them new information, 27% indicated that they were moved by these activities to seek further information on the topics, and just 17% reported that their professional development experiences were powerful enough to change their views on teaching.
- C In our December report we identified some of the issues that needed to be addressed such as: (1) the unattractiveness of the teaching profession compared to other career opportunities; (2) the physical conditions of many schools and the professional teaching environment; (3) the challenges of inner city, hard-to-staff schools; and (4) the hiring practices of many districts. We made a number of recommendations in our report that were designed to begin to turn this situation around. To the credit of the Governor and the Legislature, a number of budgetary and legislative actions were passed in the last session that represent significant steps in the right direction. These included:
 - < Efforts to improve the overall attractiveness of the teaching profession through increases in general support, an increased beginning teacher salary incentive, tax credits for professional expenses such as materials, professional development, NBPTS certification, and help with the high costs of housing.
 - < New and expanded efforts to recruit young people into the profession such as the establishment of Governor's Teaching Fellowships program.
 - < A focus on staffing low performing schools, such as the ATeaching as a Priority@ (TAP) block grants to school districts to attract and retain credentialed teachers in low performing schools (bottom half of API).
- C Obviously it is too soon to know the impact of these initiatives, but preliminary indications of the growth in the numbers of under prepared teachers and their distribution suggest what might happen without a concerted statewide action. Teacher quality needs to be as high on the policy agenda next year as it was last year.

C Our plans at the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning call for work to maintain the momentum for a teacher quality policy agenda in the state, and to help to add value to the many efforts on the books. In December of this year we will issue an interim report that will:

- < Update the secondary data included in *The Status of the Teaching Profession*, discuss any changes or trends, and raise the issue of the quality of data currently available upon which we must rely for decision making;
- < Emphasize the need to continue to focus on the staffing of low performing, highly impacted schools;
- < Call attention to the serious gaps in information about the teacher workforce and describe our efforts to integrate the databases of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the State Teachers= Retirement System;
- < Finally we will outline our research plans which will provide the base for a more comprehensive report in December of 2001 that will collect data on a variety of key issues including: Supply and Demand, Teacher Preparation, Hard-to-Staff Schools, Induction, Work Place Preparation, Professional Development, and Accomplished Teaching through continued database development, surveys, and case studies.

As you requested, I have attached a brief biography. I look forward to discussing these issues in more detail with the Commission on November 16. In the meantime, if you have any questions please feel free to call me at 415/351-2828 or e-mail me at harveyhunt@aol.com.

Sincerely,

Harvey K. Hunt